Hazards of butterfly collecting – Chasing *Papilio parsimon*, London 1999

Hazards of butterfly collecting is not just a matter of what happens in the field, but also what happens in the library and the museum, and sometimes leads to unexpected results.

Papilio parsimon was described from Sierra Leone by Fabricius as long ago as 1775; he was a fellow Dane. It is an unremarkable brown member of the Lycaenidae, now placed in the genus *Lepidochrysops*, a genus that has some hundred species. *L. parsimon* was the first member of the genus to be described and till 1923, when Bethune-Baker revised it, the name was applied to males and females of several different species, some blue, some brown, some tailed, and some un-tailed. This despite the fact that the description could only apply to one of the un-tailed, brown species of *Lepidochrysops*.

The confusion was compounded by the fact that in the Banks' collection, kept at the Natural History Museum, London, there is an un-tailed blue female marked *parsimon TYPE*, that was never mentioned anywhere by Fabricius (each time I look at material in the Banks' collection I feel a real thrill at looking at a butterfly that was caught more than 200 years ago). However, Bethune-Baker correctly pointed out that the original description clearly specified that it was a brown, un-tailed butterfly and that the Banks' specimen could not be the true type. Fabricius' type specimen was generally believed to be lost. So Bethune-Baker figured what he thought matched Fabricius' description, a brown male from Kenya.

However, there was a problem with this, because Fabricius described the species from 'Sierra Leon", and nothing like the species considered to be *L. parsimon* by Bethune-Baker has ever been collected in West Africa. One simple way of resolving this kind of issue would be to declare Sierra Leone *patria falsa* and redesignate Kenya as type locality. While considering this option, I found that Bethune-Baker's *L. parsimon* only occurred in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and eastern Zaïre, which made such an action impossible, for the simple reason that in 1775 no-one had ever swung a butterfly net within the range of this butterfly. Since the species is quite common, it seemed impossible to maintain the polite fiction that it was caught once only in Sierra Leone before 1775 and then nowhere between Sierra Leone and Kivu in eastern Zaïre.

Three brown *Lepidochrysops* are currently known from West Africa; though none has been found in Sierra Leone, any of the three might well occur there. *Lepidochrysops victoriae* Karsch, 1895 and *L. nigeriae* Stempffer, 1957 are known species, while Haydon Warren-Gash obtained an undescribed species from Guinea in 1999. In order to minimize confusion, I resolved to redescribe the Kenyan species as *L. parsimon* Larsen (not Fabricius) since it has been used consistently for a hundred years or so. I would then name the Guinea species *L. fabricii* in honour of Fabricius and apply to the International Commission for Zoological literature to rule that *Papilio parsimon* Fabricius should be considered a *nomen dubium*.

But the best laid plans of mice and men .... to be on the safe side I checked the book on the Fabrician butterflies written by Ella Zimsen; what was written about *Papilio parsimon*? "Type in Banks' collection (one in Copenhagen)". I happened to

be in Copenhagen and rushed to the Museum. Niels-Peder Kristensen had already located the specimen, which was a brown *Lepidochrysops* labeled *Parsimon* in Fabricius' handwriting. It was clearly the type that had for so long been considered lost.

What happened was that Fabricius usually kept a single syntype of each species, and when he heard that there also was one in the Banks' collection, he kept the only specimen that he ever actually saw. This was in a part of his collection that was kept in Kiel, Germany and which was placed in storage after his death until Ella Zimsen gained access to it in 1950 and arranged for it to come to the Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen on permanent loan. She also had the collection immaculately curated.

The type, almost certainly a female, is clearly that which Stempffer described as *L. nigeriae* in 1957; I could immediately compare it with the Museum's series from Lagos that I collected 30 years ago. So what began as a quest to conserve the name *parsimon*, as it is currently understood, turned into an abject failure; there is no way in which Fabricius' type can be ignored. *L. parsimon* is a senior synonym of *L. nigeriae*; it cannot be used for the East African species, for which the most senior name is *L. loveni* Aurivillius, 1921.

Fortunately, I located the type before my original plan was carried out, but it is of such stumbling detective work that the occasional changes in nomenclature arise. Such name changes will be fewer under the revised Code of Zoological Nomenclature that becomes effective in 2000 and permits sleeping dogs to lie. A name that has not been used for 100 years should not be resurrected to replace a well-known and a well-used name; a formal ruling will not be necessary for its suppression. However, *Papilio parsimon* does not fall in that category. So the changes will have to be made: *L. parsimon* and *L. loveni* for East Africa.– Torben B. Larsen, 5 Wilson Compound, 2811 Park Avenue, Pasay City, Metro-Manila, The Philippines.

Hazards of moth collecting: taking the hiss in Hampshire

Naturally, it is not in any way my intention to plagiarise the long-running series of articles by Torben Larsen – but then some opportunities are too good to miss, especially at a time when I am seriously short on copy for these pages!

Three continuous days and nights in a camper van at Oxenbourne Down, Hampshire, during June 2000, where I was undertaking a ecological study of the Biodiversity Action Plan hoverfly *Doros profuges* (Harris) for English Nature, gave me ample opportunity for a rather leisurely moth-trapping session or two; evening entertainment for me and extra records for the country park people. One evening, feeling adventurous, I ran the cable all the way down the steep slope of the down from the trees at the top where the van was parked, and set a Skinner trap on a 45 degree slope amongst chalk grassland and very short scrub. By 1am, very little had been attracted in the way of moths, and I decided to top up the generators and get some sleep (cissy, yes, but I had been up since 4am). I arose three hours later to a